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Surprise at Starlight Mansion





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ISBN 0-307-10192-4/ISBN 0-307-66192-X (lib. bdg.) A B C D E F G H I J



As Jerrica Benton was leaving her office after a long day, her sister and two of her friends were waiting to greet her.

"We heard the good news!" said Kimber Benton.

"Congratulations!" chorused Aja and Shana.

Jerrica's company, Starlight Music, had had its best year ever!

"Thanks, everyone!" said Jerrica. "But I couldn't have done it alone." She pointed to the wall, which was covered with pictures of rock stars.

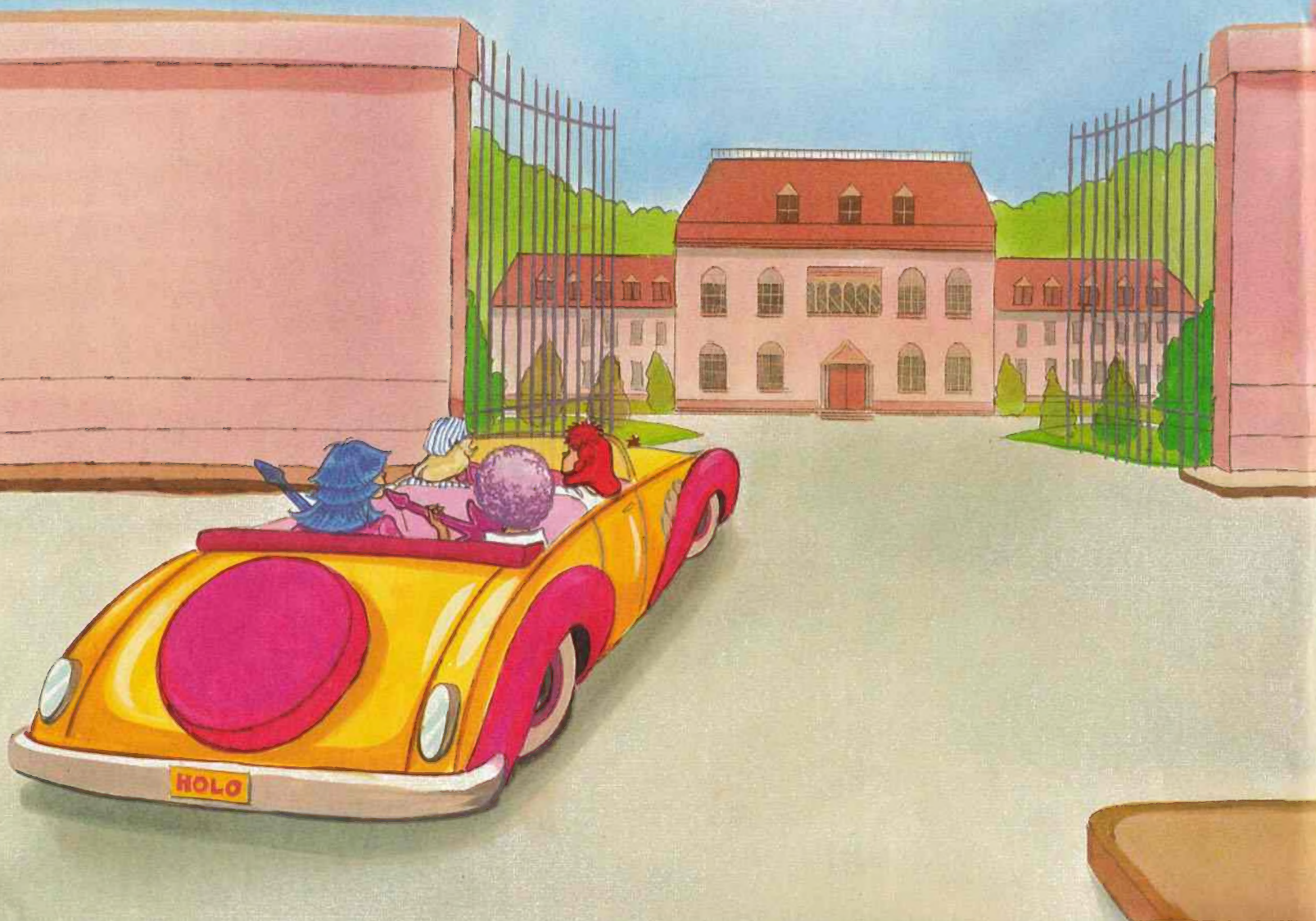
"They're all terrific," said Kimber.

Kimber, Aja, and Shana played backup for Jem and the Holograms—the hottest rock group around.



The girls rode home to Starlight Mansion, which was also a home for orphan girls. Jerrica had inherited a foundation for orphans from her father—along with a holographic computer called Synergy.

With a flick of her special earrings, Jerrica could call on Synergy and transform herself into the fabulous Jem. Only the group knew about Jerrica's double identity.





At home, Jerrica said to her friends, "Let's have a celebration dinner on Saturday night."

"Sorry, I can't take the time," Kimber said, strumming on her guitar. "I'm working on a new song."

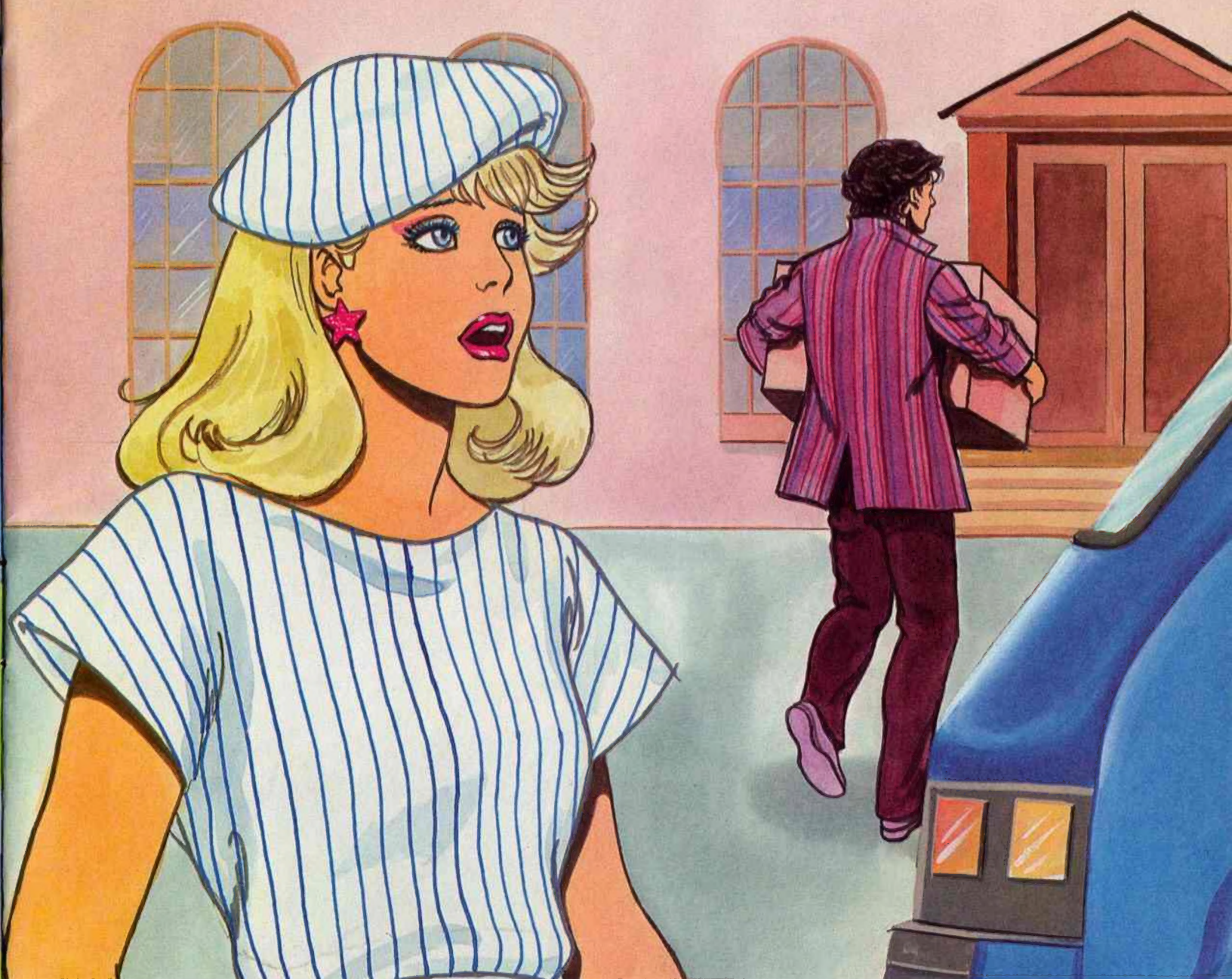
"Shana and I are busy, too," Aja added.



Jerrica was a little surprised by the girls' lack of interest. Then she heard a car door slam outside. "There's Rio. I'll bet I can talk him into it."

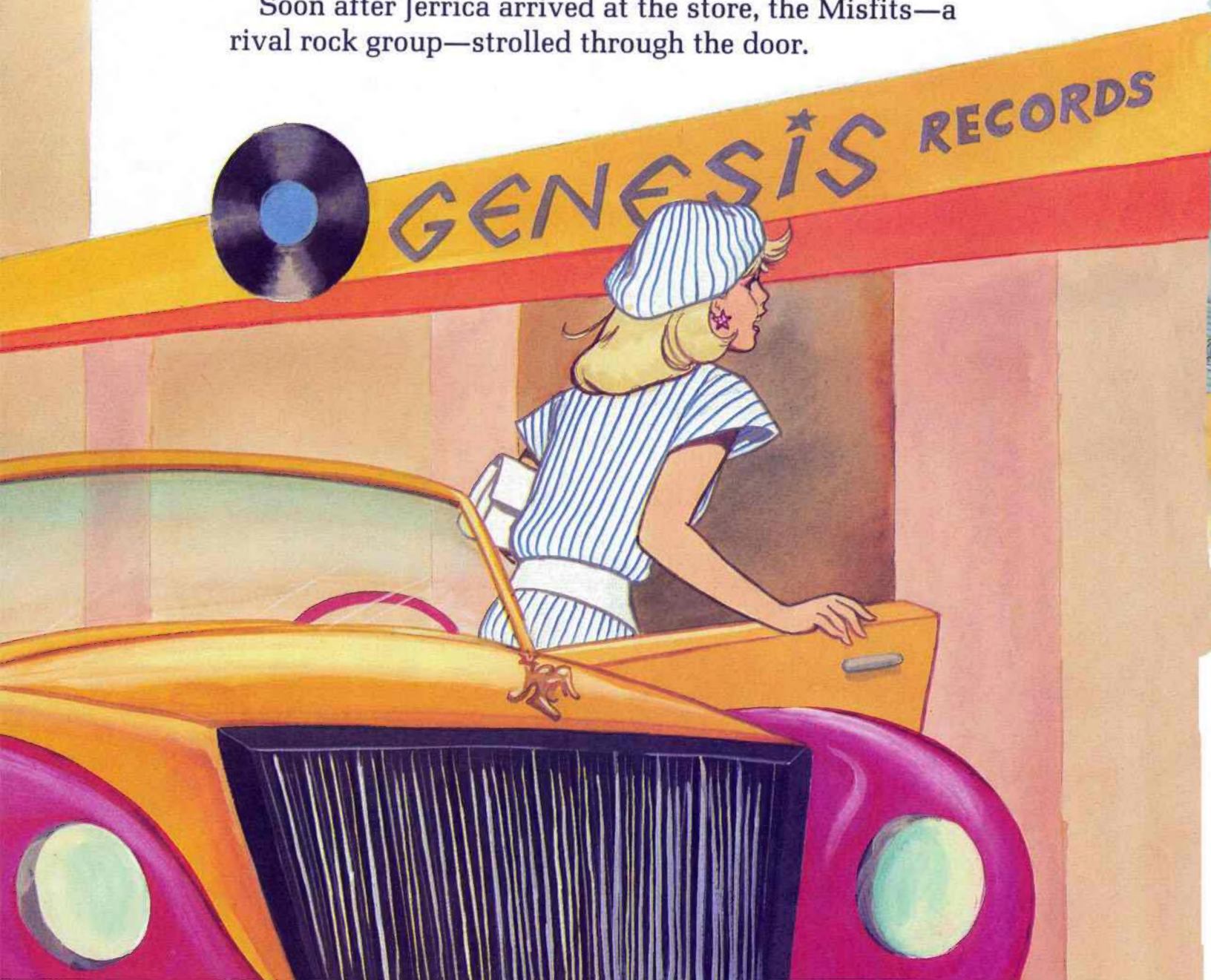
Rio was Jerrica's boyfriend and the Holograms' manager. But when Jerrica asked him about Saturday, he said, "I think I've got plans. I'll let you know later."

Hurriedly, Rio took a big cardboard box out of his van. "This is for Shana," he mumbled. "See you later, Jerrica."
Rio disappeared into the mansion without a backward glance.



"Looks like I won't be doing much celebrating," Jerrica thought. But she didn't want to give in to hurt feelings. "A trip to Genesis Records always cheers me up," she decided.

Soon after Jerrica arrived at the store, the Misfits—a rival rock group—strolled through the door.





"Are you here to buy our new album?" Stormer teased Jerrica. "It'll show you how a rock group is supposed to sound!"

"Why aren't we invited to Rio's big party Saturday?" Roxy interrupted.

"What party?" asked Jerrica.

"You don't know about it?" Pizzazz said nastily.

"Maybe Rio's taking Jem instead of you."



Jerrica was speechless. It was true that she'd begun to worry about Rio's interest in the Holograms' lead singer. Jerrica had never told him that she and Jem were the same person.

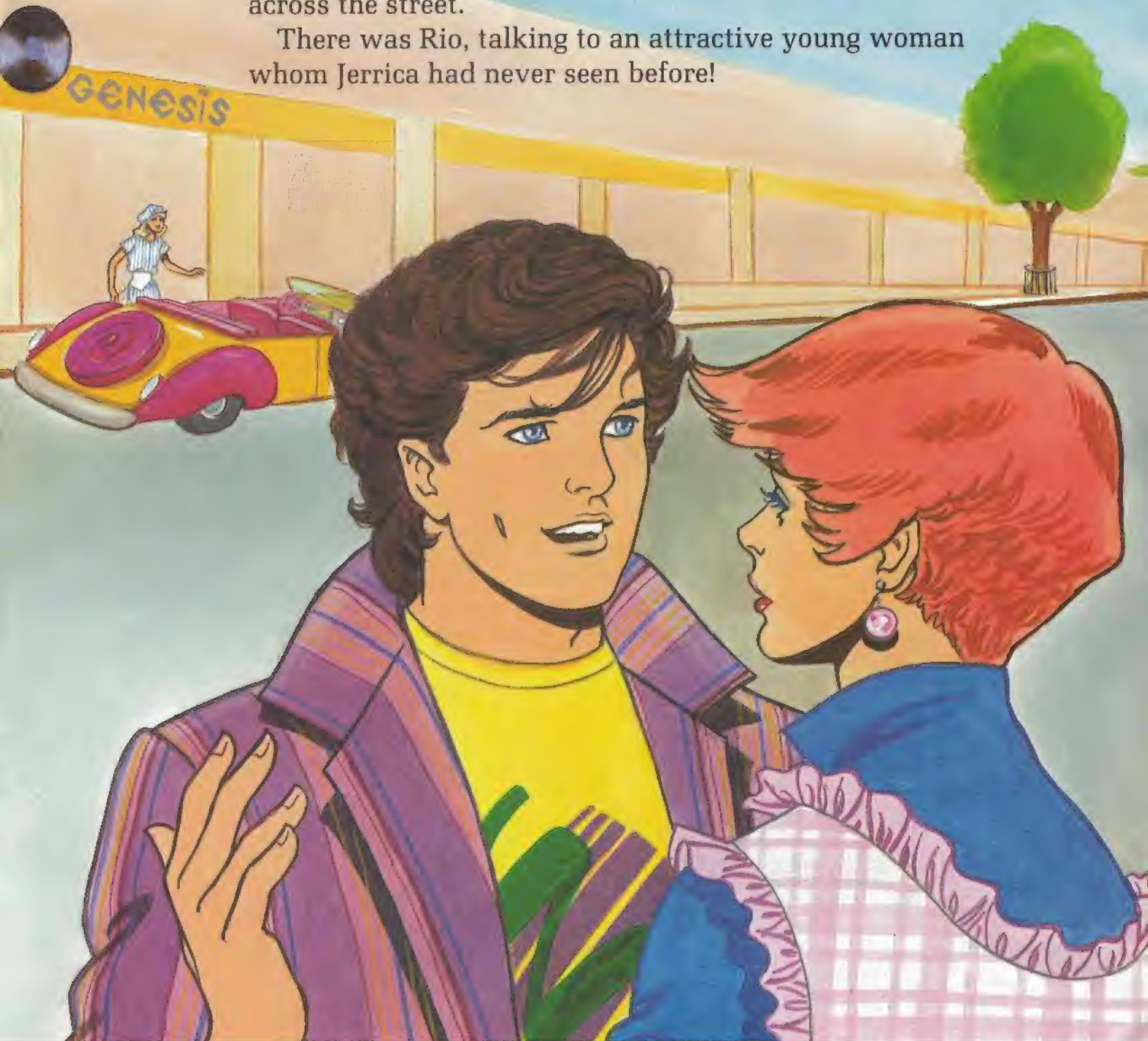
"Well?" Pizzazz pressed, waiting for Jerrica's response. But Jerrica hurried out of the store.

Pizzazz burst out laughing. "I think we hit a nerve," she said to Roxy and Stormer.

Outside, Jerrica thought, "If there is a party, and Rio hasn't told me about it, the Misfits may be right."

She was about to open the car door, when she glanced across the street.

There was Rio, talking to an attractive young woman whom Jerrica had never seen before!



Rio took the woman's arm and helped her into his van.
As Jerrica watched them drive away, her heart sank.
Not only did she have to worry about Rio's attraction to
Jem but now there was a new person to wonder about!





At the rehearsal studio later, Jerrica cornered Rio. "What about Saturday?" she asked.

"Sorry," Rio said uneasily. "Some other time." He checked his watch. "Where's Jem? We're starting the rehearsal now."

"I'll find her for you," Jerrica said, and she headed for the dressing room.



Aja, Shana, and Kimber were already in their costumes. "Are you okay?" Aja asked Jerrica. "You look unhappy."

"I'm fine." Jerrica touched one of her earrings. "Show's on, Synergy," she said. Instantly, Jerrica became Jem.

"Let's go!" she said. She added sadly to herself, "Now Rio will ask Jem to the party."

At the end of the rehearsal, however, Rio just said,
"You all sounded great. I know you're tired, so why don't
you go on home? I'll take care of the instruments."

"So he's not asking Jem, after all," Jerrica thought. "Is
he already tired of her, too?"





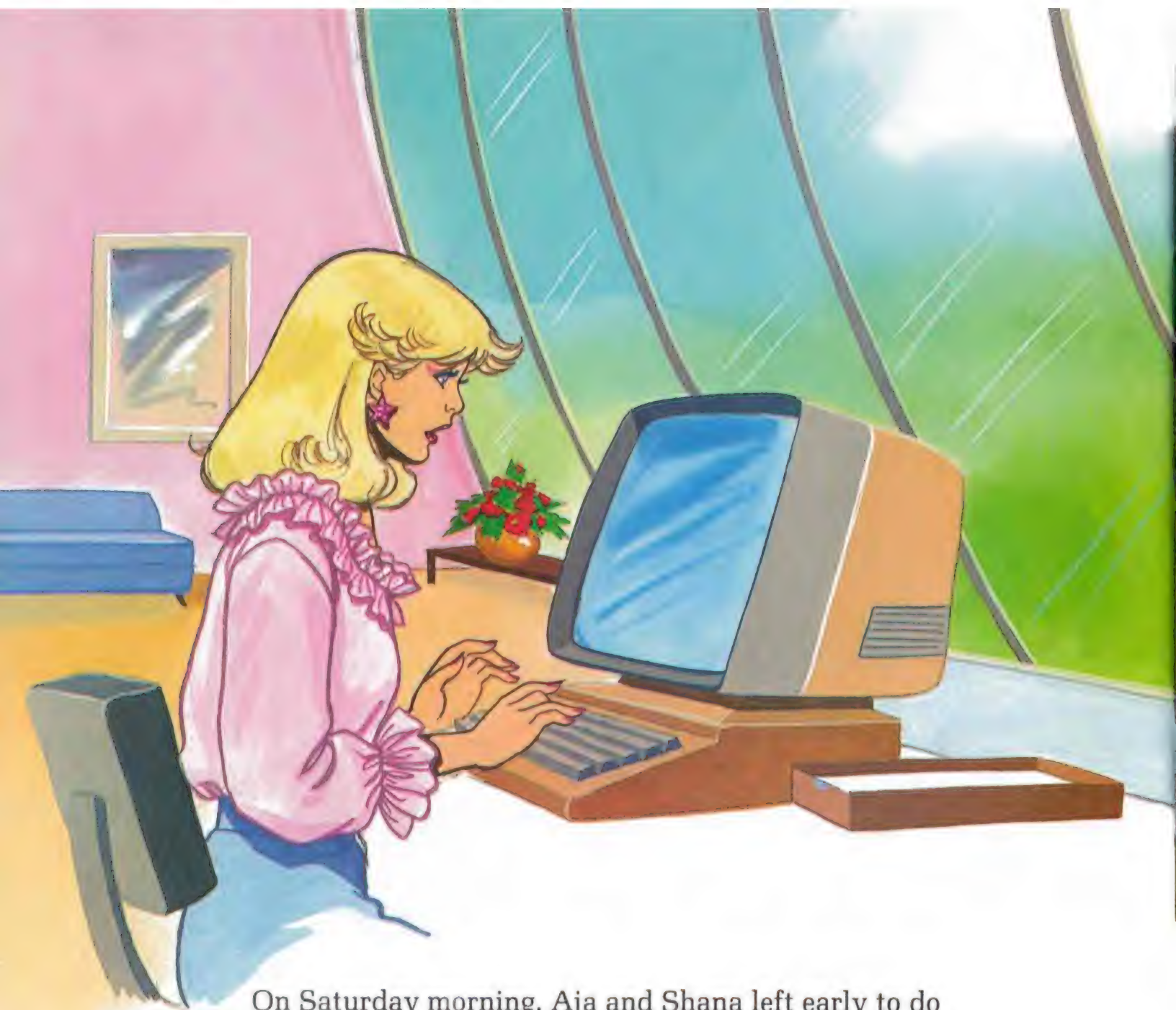
Back at the mansion, Jerrica told the girls what the Misfits had said.

Kimber shook her head. "If Rio were having a party, we'd be the first to know, wouldn't we?"

"Those Misfits are just putting you on," Shana added.



But Jerrica saw Kimber and Aja give each other suspicious looks. Did they know something about Rio they weren't telling? Maybe they just didn't want to upset her....



On Saturday morning, Aja and Shana left early to do some errands. Kimber stayed home to practice her guitar.

Jerrica drove down to Starlight Music to catch up on her work. She didn't want to sit around at home, thinking about Rio.

Later that afternoon, Jerrica went to a screening of a rock video by one of her company's new groups.

"Would you like to have dinner?" the director asked her afterward. "You seem a little down."

"No, thanks," Jerrica told him. "I'm afraid I wouldn't be very good company tonight."



Starlight Mansion looked strangely dark when Jerrica pulled up in front. When she opened the door, the lights flashed on.

"Surprise!" everyone shouted. Waiting in the living room were the Holograms, Rio, the orphan girls, and other friends.

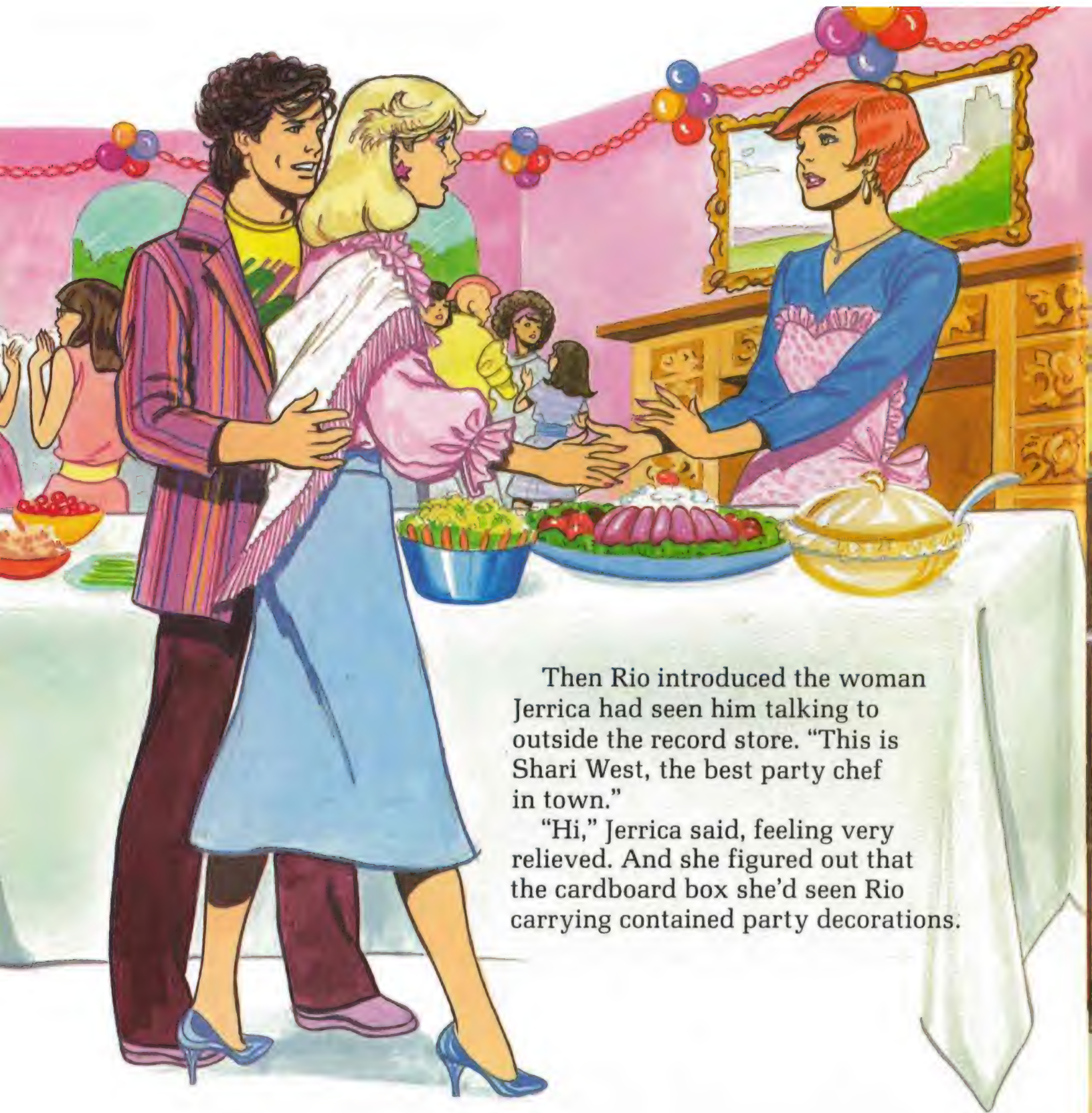
"Congratulations to the most successful record producer in the nation!" Rio said proudly. He gave Jerrica a hug.





"Everyone's here but Jem," Rio went on. "I'm sure Kimber told her about the party."

Jerrica turned aside and quickly touched her earring. In seconds, a holographic image of Jem appeared across the room.



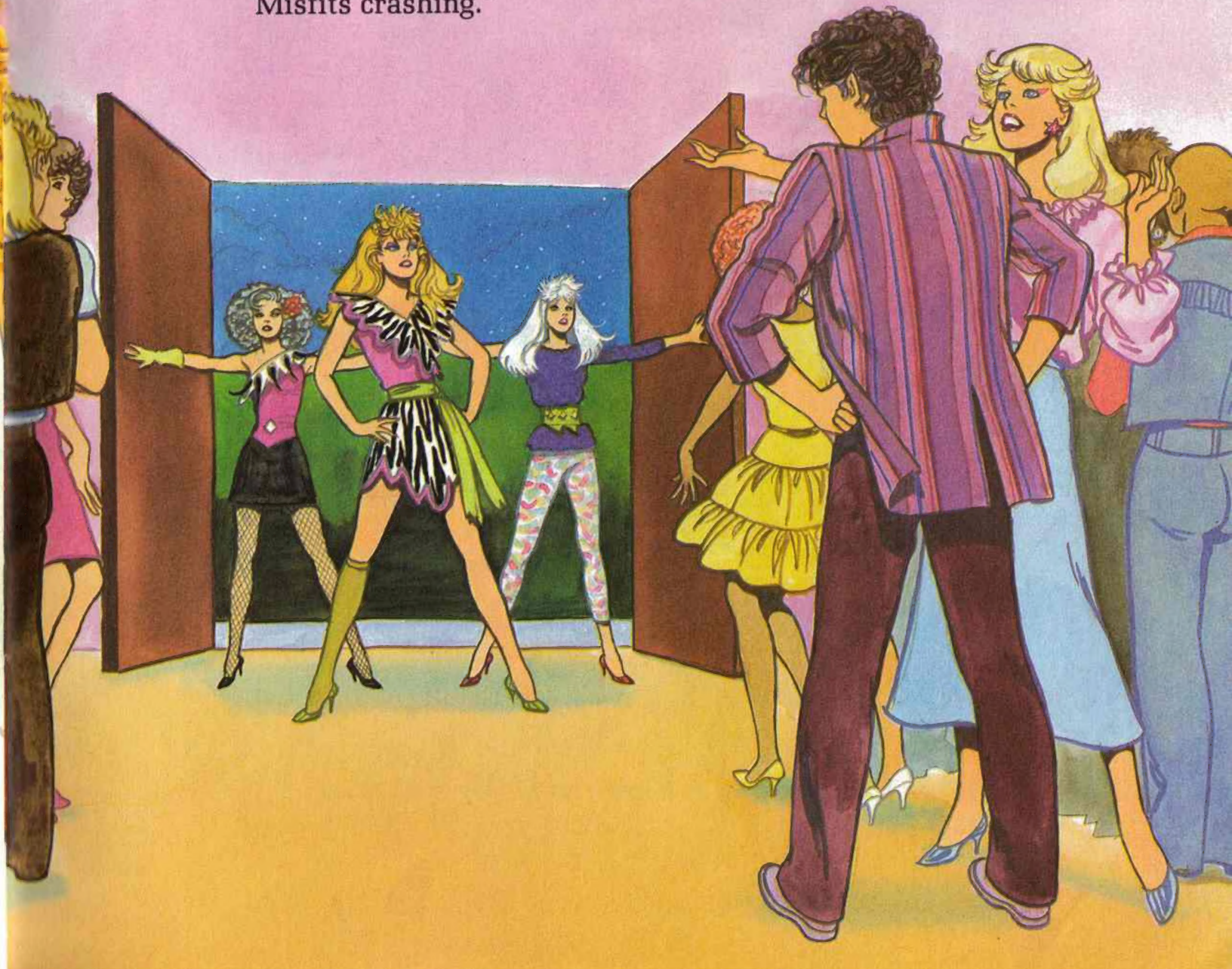
Then Rio introduced the woman Jerrica had seen him talking to outside the record store. "This is Shari West, the best party chef in town."

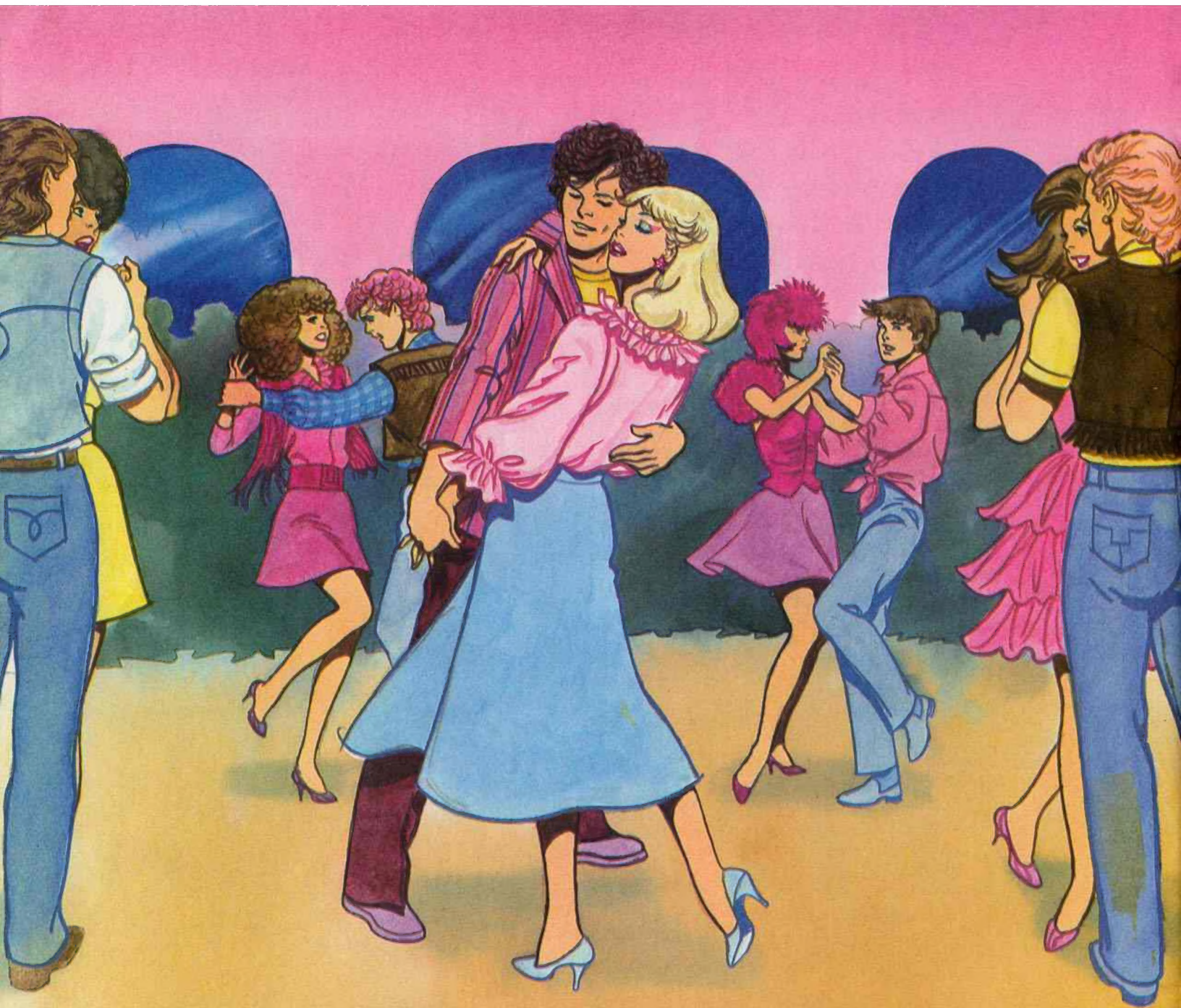
"Hi," Jerrica said, feeling very relieved. And she figured out that the cardboard box she'd seen Rio carrying contained party decorations.

Suddenly, the front door flew open and the Misfits strutted in.

"No one invited you," Rio told them angrily. "You'll have to leave."

But Jerrica stopped him. "Everything is just perfect," she said. "A party wouldn't be a party without the Misfits crashing."





Happily, Jerrica led Rio into the center of the room. The lights dimmed, soft music began to play, and Jerrica and Rio started dancing cheek to cheek.

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